

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES
MARCH 30, 2007

Pursuant to notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a meeting of the Board of Selectmen was held at 8:00AM in the Hearing Room.

Present were Virginia McIntyre, Chair; Anne D. Shapiro; Margaret B. Briggs; Gregory P. Howes. Also present was Christopher Whelan, Town Manager. In addition, there were representatives of various parties interested in playing fields and the Hugh Cargill Trust parcel.

Ms. McIntyre stated that the purpose of the meeting is to review the status of Articles 30 and 35. Article 30 will focus on the location of playing fields at the Regional High School. Article 30 will not include the Wastewater Treatment Plant or the Walden Street location.

Mr. Howes noted that Article 35 Petitioner, Jim Catterton, has expressed concern with Walden Street being in Article 30. The Playing Fields Group agreed to compromise by deferring the possibility of including Walden Street in this Article. In his opinion, the discussion should focus on whether playing fields and agriculture can ever co-exist on the parcel. This should be a larger conversation about the various interests, needs and concerns of all the stakeholder groups.

Jim Catterton reviewed the history and objective of Article 35. Those who were concerned about the proposals in Article 30 decided not to wait for the process to completely unfold and become a *fait accompli*. He stated that his intentions regarding the article have not changed with the stated excision of the Walden Street property from playing fields funding. Mr. Catterton distributed a memo regarding a management plan for the site.

The land has been in fragmented Town ownership for many years with the Board of Selectmen acting as Trustees of the Hugh Cargill Farm Trust.. The School was built in the 1950's and the Kenney's took in hay from the site. Nowadays, the agriculture land is reverting to wetland due to lack of use. Current uses of the Hugh Cargill Land include a Town well site, elementary school, and community gardens.

John Bemis speaking for the Agriculture Committee noted that adding an agriculture demonstration site to the classroom was a possibility. In the future there must be an expansion site for community gardens. The Concord Historical Commission supports Article 35 and the restoration of farming on the site as a gateway to Concord.

Marian Thornton shared an excerpt of the 1987 Long Range Plan that recommends first clearing woods for playing fields rather than consuming farm land.

Playing Fields advocates acknowledged the value of farming in the community, the need for additional playing fields, the use of the site as a ball field well before the construction of a school, the need for open and fair public discussion to reach consensus, the need to process a solution before placing a Motion before Town Meeting. Agriculture and playing fields can co-exist quite well.

Dekkers Davidson stated that there needs to be a collaborative planning process with the Natural Resources Commission, the Public Works Commission, Planning Board, School Committee and the Zoning Board of Appeals. Parts of the Trust land have been repurposed for the public good for the last 150 years. To have a motion at Town Meeting before the process is complete is premature.

Ms. McIntyre noted her preference for a public discussion of all voices that will enable flexibility without rancor. This is not something that only one committee can decide. There was discussion regarding other playing fields options, including Burke and Ammendolia land. All parcels considered have limitations, restrictions, and impacts.

Public Works Commission member Paul Mahoney noted that any change in use will require State approval. However, it is unlikely that the State would render an opinion on a concept. Permanency of change and site control will be issues for the State. The value of Article 35 is that it has focused discussion on this important parcel. It is an historical gateway dominated by open fields and a school. In his opinion playing fields would be a natural fit, but design will be key. Article 35 is premature because any action on it precludes uses that have not been fully reviewed and analyzed.

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Ms. Schnitzer recommended that discussions on whether, if, and how, focus on the small portion of the parcel next to the school. She stated that discussion should not solely be about playing fields. Perhaps the Public Works Commission should be mowing differently. Perhaps major portions should be return to agricultural use. In her opinion, the Board of Selectmen, as caretakers of the Trust, should give provide leadership and energy to the discussion.

The Natural Resources Commission will consider this Article at its meeting of April 6th. There are no management plans for Conservation Restricted areas. Part of its consideration will be the floodplain issue. The Natural Resources Commission will not permit intensive use or fill in those areas. The Commission's recommendation to Town Meeting may be to support, oppose or to take no position.

Ms. Briggs noted that timing is important, that plans should be further developed before decisions limiting use are imposed. In her opinion, mitigation is possible. The soil can be saved for farms and the community gardens. The height of the fields' components would generally be hidden by the hay field.

Ms. Shapiro reiterated that this is Trust land and that the Town should be careful in maintaining the Trust purpose. She recommended seeking Town Counsel opinion. While playing fields can make retaining the historical character difficult, it is too quick to make the determination at Town Meeting.

Ms. McIntyre noted her preference that this article not be moved at Town Meeting to allow time for the process to continue and that only the regional high school fields go forward at this time.

Mr. Howes noted the value of sharing ideas in a process that takes time. However, he noted that this is a Petition Article and the Petitioner is the final arbiter.

Town Manager Christopher Whelan noted that moving ahead depends upon private fundraising. Perhaps Ammendolia land will go ahead this year. There are 18 mos. of a three-year Natural Resources permit remaining. The Regional School land will be developed as soccer fields.

There was consensus that there should be a task force comprised of the various interests to continue the discussion.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: To adjourn the Open Session and to conclude business.

Anne D. Shapiro	Aye
Virginia McIntyre	Aye
Gregory P. Howes	Aye
Margaret B. Briggs	Aye

The meeting adjourned at 9:30AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory P. Howes, Clerk pro tem

Adjourn